

WHITE RIVER SCHOOL
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Dear Families:

The WRS Spring Concert is coming up: Thursday, May 18 at 6:30 P.M. Hope you can make it!

In science we will soon begin a unit on plants. The focus of the unit is on plant parts-- stem, roots, leaves, etc-- and the job that each part does to help the plant survive. Each student will plant some seeds. In small groups we will observe trays of all different kinds of seeds-- different shapes, colors, sizes, and textures. We will practice using good vocabulary to describe them and to guess what kinds they are. We will soak seeds overnight so that the next day we can split them open and discover the baby plant inside. We will be making sprouting bags in which we keep moist several different kinds of seeds in clear plastic bags so that we get to see the roots and shoots up close once the seeds germinate. We will do an experiment with water that has been dyed with food coloring and see what happens when we place a stalk of celery and some flowers in this water (and what that tells us about the job of plants' stems). It's a hands-on unit to end the year with as things start to really green up outdoors.

Right now in writing workshop students are writing fictional narratives. We began our unit on narrative writing by looking at several published books from a writer's perspective. Many of the best stories have at their center a problem, or some way in which the character has to grow or change. We created a classroom chart of some books we examined. For each book we noted what type of problem it featured. In *The Kissing Hand*, for example, the problem was it was the first time the character did something (went to school); in both *Owl Babies* and *Shortcut*, the problem is that we worry something bad will happen but it turns out okay. In *Julius the Baby of the World*, the problem is that the character has to grow up or change a little (she is jealous of her baby brother). And in *Make Way for Ducklings*, the problem is that the characters want/need something important (a place to live).

We then practiced telling orally some stories with characters we dreamed up, inspired by these types of problems we'd seen authors write about. Students told stories of being nervous to go to a new school, of kittens scared in a storm, of a snake who realized why he doesn't have many friends, of a cheetah who lost his family, and a girl who loses her little brother at the zoo! As we told the stories we practiced stretching them out to include setting the scene at the start, describing the problem, telling about a couple of things they tried or important events that happened, and finally telling how it ended or worked out.

Then we wrote out stories in blank books with pictures over the course of several days. When we reached the final page of their books, we again spent time examining published books and how authors end their stories. *The Kissing Hand* ends by telling how the character feels. *Shortcut* ends by looking back on the experience/telling the lesson that the character(s) learned. Some books end by

having the characters comment on the experience, like in *Owl Babies*. *Julius* ended with a phrase many students liked and adopted: “And from then on...”

This week students began a narrative writing process again, this time telling a fictional narrative inspired by varied photos I had in the classroom. They got off to a great start today, setting the scene by describing what the people in the photo are doing at the start of their story. Ask your child to tell you about his or her fictional narratives (which will come home eventually)!